

One step forward, two steps back

WILLIAM E. COLBY, former CIA director, recognizes that reform of the agency is crucial to its performance. Yet he doesn't recognize that administrative reform only skims the surface of the agency's problems.

Colby spoke recently at the University of Rochester — where the CIA conducted surreptitious mind-control experiments in the 1950s. Perhaps that's why his comments on the CIA's role in a democracy carried a special poignancy.

Colby said three things could be done to improve the CIA:

- Enacting clear guidelines so the agency knows what's expected;
- Forming congressional oversight committees to supervise operations;
- Educating the public on the agency's purposes and problems.

OF COURSE, these are far from new ideas; they've been already brought up during public congressional hearings. But they're not regressive. And that's just what Colby's comments were on CIA jurisdiction.

Replying to a student's question about how the agency hopes to reconcile U.S. support of a country's self-determination with CIA efforts to help elect politicians friendly to us, he said, "We are in favor of self-determination for any country, but we are not in favor of self-determination for a country that will put us in mortal harm."

Another Catch-22.